

Senate Bill 108  
March 3, 2011  
Presented by Quentin Kujala  
House Local Government Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Quentin Kujala, Wildlife Management Section Chief for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information about Senate Bill 108.

SB108 requires FWP to ensure county commissioners and Tribes in counties within 200 miles of national parks with identifiable populations of large predators have the opportunity for consultation with state and federal agencies prior to state and federal policy decisions involving large predator and large game species.

FWP can encourage federal agencies to consult and coordinate with county and Tribal governments, but has no control over policy decisions made by federal agencies. As such, we recommend the reference to federal agencies be deleted.

When making policy decisions regarding large predators, FWP always is interested in coordination with affected county commissions. However, the amendment to this bill that expands the consultation requirement to counties within 200 miles of a national park, vs. bordering national parks, makes it so approximately 80% of the counties in the state and all but one Tribal reservation (Ft. Peck) must have the opportunity for consultation and coordination prior to any state decision regarding large predators – all but the very eastern counties. FWP thinks this expanded requirement makes the bill more cumbersome than is necessary, for both the counties and the Department, and greatly expands the coordination/consultation beyond counties that might be directly affected by a policy or decision regarding large predators. This ultimately dilutes the effectiveness of such a coordination requirement.

FWP recommends the bill be amended to strike the “within 200 miles of a national park” and instead read “in counties and with Tribes directly affected by a policy decision regarding large predators”. In so doing, this bill would codify the relationship between FWP and county and Tribes on issues regarding large predators that directly affect those counties and Tribes. FWP can and will ensure county commissions are consulted on issues associated with *state* policy decisions.